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AUTHOR Shapiro, Michael
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of "Teach for America," a program modeled after the Peace Corps, was to recruit a cadre of bright college graduates to become uncertified teachers for two years in some of America's toughest schools. This book tracks the successes and failures of the program in its first year and presents the stories of seven idealistic corps members as they encountered America's classrooms for the first time as teachers. These corps members learned lessons about what it means to be a teacher. For example, they learned that being a good teacher meant knowing not only the subject, but the difference between a violent child begging for attention and the child filled with uncontrollable rage. They learned that control didn't mean keeping children in their seats, but keeping them engaged and excited. They encountered the obstacles that stood in the way of teaching such as bureaucracies that imposed outdated and arbitrary curriculum guidelines, or neighborhoods where children came of age surrounded by poverty, drug addiction, broken families, disease, and death. On a more positive note, they learned that there were people in America's classrooms who wanted to teach and were searching for ways to connect to students, and that there were reformers devising new ways to teach and discovering new ways that learning happens. (LL)

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